

many Federal Government agencies that have not yet received full year funding.

Several outstanding issues need to be resolved in order to complete the final seven appropriations bills, and I am hopeful that the hard work of the Appropriations Committee will not be in vain by resorting to a year-long continuing resolution for the remaining bills.

Congress must act in order to fully fund essential transportation and housing programs, environmental protection efforts, the Appalachian Regional Commission, NASA programs, the Census, FEMA relief programs, and to prevent President Trump from freezing the pay of over 2 million Federal civil servants, by enacting the 1.9 percent cost of living increase for Federal workers that the Senate passed on a broad bipartisan basis.

While I am glad this short-term continuing resolution will provide for an extension to keep the flood insurance program from unnecessarily lapsing, I want to see Congress enact a long-term reauthorization. This year's flooding of Ellicott City shows that we need a long-term solution. That is why I am an original cosponsor of the SAFE act, which provides for a 5-year extension for the program, in addition to important program enhancement as well as the Federal Flood Risk Management Act that ensures that federally owned or funded buildings, housing, and infrastructure, be made more weather-resistant and resilient so that we can protect our communities and our investment of Federal tax dollars.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I look forward to working with my colleagues over the next 2 weeks to complete the committee's fiscal year 2019 work.

BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS ACT OF 2017

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the November 29, 2018, letter from the Congressional Budget Office regarding H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017, be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
U.S. CONGRESS,
Washington, DC, November 29, 2018.

Hon. MIKE ENZI,
Chairman, Committee on the Budget,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: On May 15, 2018, the Congressional Budget Office transmitted an estimate of the budgetary effects of H.R. 299, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on May 8, 2018. Among other things, the act would provide disability compensation to more of the veterans who served in the territorial seas of Vietnam during the Vietnam

War under the assumption that they had been exposed to Agent Orange, a blend of herbicides used by the Department of Defense to remove dense tropical foliage. CBO estimated that those provisions would increase direct spending by about \$900 million over the 2019-2028 period.

The bill that was passed by the House amended the earlier version to expand the nautical area in which veterans would be presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. That change would increase CBO's estimate of the costs of the legislation by about \$250 million to account for the additional veterans that would be affected.

Since the original estimate was prepared in May, CBO has obtained new information that would affect future estimates of similar legislation. In total, we expect that accounting for this new information would increase the estimate of the legislation's effect on direct spending by at least \$1 billion over 10 years.

First, CBO now expects that more veterans would be affected by enactment of the bill than previously estimated. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) already presumes that veterans who served aboard certain U.S. Navy ships on the dates they were near the coast of Vietnam were exposed to Agent Orange. Using information about the crew size of those listed ships, CBO estimated that about two-thirds of veterans who served in the geographic area covered by the bill would obtain compensation under current law. Thus, in its estimate for H.R. 299, CBO projected that only one-third of veterans in the covered population would be newly eligible for disability compensation under that bill.

We have since learned from additional discussions with VA that there is considerably more uncertainty than we originally anticipated about the number of veterans that, under current law, VA would presume to have been exposed because of service aboard those vessels. Specifically, there is a greater likelihood that less than two-thirds of veterans who served in the geographic area covered by the bill would obtain compensation under current law.

To account for that uncertainty CBO would, in future estimates expect that half of affected beneficiaries would obtain benefits under current law, and thus would not be affected by enactment of H.R. 299. That estimate is in the middle of the range of possible outcomes. Using that updated estimate would mean that fewer veterans would be expected to receive benefits under current law and more would get benefits as a result of H.R. 299. The increase in the number of affected veterans would result in additional retroactive payments to veterans whose disability claims previously have been denied by VA and also would increase the number of recurring disability payments.

In addition, on the basis of new information from VA, CBO also would increase its estimate of the number of surviving spouses of deceased veterans who would receive compensation because the cause of those veterans' deaths would be presumed to have been caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

Finally, CBO would estimate that spending subject to appropriation would increase for additional personnel to process disability claims. Such spending would allow VA to handle new claims more quickly. Although H.R. 299 would not require VA to hire more personnel to process these additional claims, the department has indicated that it would need to do so in order to avoid a lengthy backlog.

CBO will incorporate this new information into its future estimates of the budgetary effects of such legislation.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Logan Smith.

Sincerely,

KEITH HALL,
Director.

REMEMBERING LYUDMILA ALEXEYEVA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to Lyudmila Alexeyeva, a true giant for human rights in Russia and around the world. Ms. Alexeyeva passed away over the weekend in Moscow and left behind children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, but that was just her immediate family. Lyudmila's leadership and fearlessness inspired a generation of human rights and democracy activists in Russia; she was the grandmother of human rights in the country, and her stalwart leadership in the face of repression will truly be missed. Today is International Human Rights Day, a fitting moment to pay tribute this incredible leader.

In thinking about Lyudmila's legacy, three words come to mind: vision, tenacity, and courage.

Starting from her days drafting a Samizdat journal called the Chronicle of Current Events that scrutinized the Khrushchev regime, Lyudmila had the vision of a Soviet Union in which all of its citizens played a role in ensuring accountable governance and democratic principles. She saw the opportunity to fulfill this vision in the 1975 Helsinki Accords, especially those tenets which enshrined the critical notion that signatory countries' respect for human rights inside their borders was integral to security in the transatlantic region. The Brezhnev government at the time had no intention of honoring those elements of Helsinki, but Lyudmila worked together with her compatriots to set up the Moscow Helsinki Group to monitor implementation of the Accords. The Moscow Helsinki Group inspired the proliferation of sister organizations in other countries whose governments had committed to Helsinki principles, including here in Congress with the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe. This platform inside of the Soviet Union and across the transatlantic space was critically important to build those bonds of international solidarity among so many likeminded democrats and human rights defenders. She was indeed a true visionary for open, democratic societies, and the bonds she built with and among activists who shared that vision stand strong to this day.

Second, tenacity—Lyudmila faced so many obstacles during the Soviet period and the Putin era. After starting Moscow Helsinki, the pressure from the Soviet regime grew so great that she had to seek exile in the United States for 16 years. During that time, she became an American citizen, a proud moment for us here in this country. While in exile, she remained committed to